

News of the Week.

THE WAR.

We have important news this week from both Grant and Sherman. The former has shown the rebels and the whole country that he has not been idle in front of Petersburg. From Sherman we have full and interesting details of the battle of Peach Tree Creek, which resulted in the defeat of the rebels under Hood. The rebels, it is believed under Early have made another raid north, this time into Pennsylvania, and we are sorry to say, have done much damage. In the unprovoked burning of Chambersburg, we think they have shown a barbarism unequalled in the history of their cruelty during the war.

GEN. SHERMAN'S ARMY.

Battle of Peach Tree Creek. Peach Tree Creek is a small but difficult stream, covering Atlanta on the North and partially on the East. It was near this place that the first heavy battle occurred between our forces and the enemy after crossing the Chattahoochee.

Disposition of our forces.

After crossing the Creek, which was actually completed by the morning of the 20th, our left, under McPherson, rested on the Augusta Railroad, south of Decatur, and about five miles from Atlanta. The Fourteenth Corps was on the extreme right, near the mouth of Peach Tree Creek. On the left of the latter Newton's Division of the Fourth Corps. A gap then occurred in our lines for three miles, which was covered on the south bank of the creek by a curtain of pickets from Newton's Division. On the left of the gap was concentrated the rest of our army, several divisions originally on the right having been moved there early on the morning of the 20th, with a view to strengthen that wing, in front of which the enemy made numerous feints, as if about to precipitate his whole army against it. The enemy thus being, during the morning of the 20th, massed on our left, orders were issued to Newton, Hooker and Palmer on the right to advance and close the gap of three miles. Newton, on the left, was ordered to move first, protecting his left flank by the creek. Successfully Hooker's and Palmer's corps were to close upon Newton, and establish a new line as far as possible in advance of the trenches, which they had constructed a half mile south of Peach Tree Creek immediately after crossing.

Skirmishing.

Accordingly, about 1 P. M., Newton deployed five regiments as skirmishers and, pushed forward handsomely, driving clouds of the enemy's sharpshooters before them, and scattering their skirmish reserves. By 3 P. M. he had advanced three-fourths of a mile and carried a prominent ridge in his front, on which, after sending fresh skirmish lines forward, he proceeded to establish his division. His troops unsling knapsacks, stacked arms, and fell to erecting a rail barricade with a will. Hooker now advanced from his trenches. Butterfield's Division, now commanded by General Ward on the left, Geary in the center and General Williams on the right. Palmer prepared to close up on Hooker, whenever the latter should establish his new line. The country over which this advance was progressing, is difficult country, and particularly so with dense undergrowth. In the advance, prisoners were captured at different points along the line, who unanimously stated that no considerable body of their troops was nearer than a mile and a half. They were, beyond doubt, sent out to be captured for this purpose. Not less than three-fourths of the entire Rebel army were concealed within, musket-shot of our skirmishers.

The Battle.

It was about half-past three when the enemy's skirmishers, advancing as if to reconnoitre, gave notice that something was impending. Our line had halted longer than was expected, and just upon the point of resuming the advance, when this appearance of the Rebels determined Newton to remain behind his hastily constructed works on the hill, and Hooker to march his troops at once from the lower ground in front of him, so that he might connect with Newton's right. The order to advance was scarcely given, when from the high ground north of the stream, all Hooker's batteries, and part of Howard's broke forth in a simultaneous peal of thunder. The Rebel legions were pouring forth from the woods beyond the open fields at the top of the ridge, and pressing forward, rank behind rank, in starting and magnificent array, seemed resolved to crush at one blow whatever might oppose them. This spectacle the artilleryists upon the elevated ground north of the creek could plainly see, but the infantry, climbing up the hill, on the south, could not. A moment later, and a savage yell upon the left, followed by the clang and clatter of ten thousand muskets, announced that Newton's Division had been assailed by the foe. On Newton's left the enemy did not wait to push forward a skirmish line, but charged at once in lines of battle, two and three deep. Our skirmishers in advance of our hastily constructed works, were driven in with the velocity of whirlwind, and as they rushed back in disorderly haste, came near throwing into confusion the extreme right of Newton, and for a moment caused it to give way.

Meantime Brigadier General Geary's Division of Hooker's Corps, which was considerably in advance of both Williams's Division on the right, and Ward's (Butterfield's) on the left, was struck by the rushing storm and temporarily shattered. Both his right and his centre brigades were pushed from their positions after a short and desperate resistance, and hurled down the hill nearly to the banks of the creek. General Ward's Division was still advancing up the hill-side, when the wary old Kentuckian who at present leads it saw, as he then supposed, both Geary on his right and Newton on his left were in a state of confusion. He was about to detach three or four regiments to their assistance when, to his astonishment, the whole scene was changed as if by magic. Newton's line became firm as a rock, and, without another sign of wavering, continued to pour into the Rebel host a steady, uninterrupted and deadly fire. Even the stragglers from his skirmish line were rallied and did excellent service in a manner I shall describe presently. At the same time Geary's disordered regiment reformed even under a withering fire from the enemy, while a couple of his batteries directing their pieces full at the right flank of the lines which had driven us back, tore them in pieces with a tornado of shot and shell. The indentation in our lines produced by the giving way of Geary's two brigades became a pit of death into which hundreds of maddened Rebels plunged, only to die, or fall wounded and bleeding upon the sod. Not another inch did Geary retire, but began

slowly to advance until, when the fight closed, he occupied exactly the same ground as when it began.

It was just as General Ward became convinced that all was going well with Newton and Geary, that his own line reached the edge of the hill-side I have described of thirty paces, by the flower of the Rebel army! The fearful tumult that at once broke forth was such that no man could tell which portion of it was the roar of musketry, and which the fierce, indignant, defiant yell that each host hurled at the other. Both were surprised. Our men scarcely knew that the enemy had emerged from the opposite woods, when they found themselves in their presence. The Rebels, disappointed elsewhere, supposed that they had reached their long-looked-for gap, but found instead a line of battle and sheet of vindictive fire! Both lines instantly charged forward, pouring the leaden hail full into each others' bosoms. They stood in some places but fifteen feet apart, and still hurled death in each others' faces. They charged again, and the men intermingled and fought hand to hand! In places the lines crossed each other, and then wheeled around only to renew the combat, the Rebels facing Atlanta, the soldiers of the Union Peach Tree Creek! So intense was the interest among our men to repel the Rebels in their immediate front, that they did not perceive that a small column had passed around entirely to the left of Blake, and penetrated the right of that long line of skirmishers which I have described as alone holding the huge gap between Newton and Wood, until they heard the noise of conflict immediately in their rear. The Rebels had reached the Buckhead and Atlanta road. But there was one man near-by who saw these Rebels and marked them as doomed. General Thomas was overlooking the progress of the fight in the rear of Newton. The moment he perceived the body of Rebels I have mentioned, he hastily got together a force of pioneers from Kimball's brigade, some of the straggling skirmishers who had fled before the first rebel onset, and a couple of pieces of artillery. Taking immediate personal command of this novel battalion, he assailed the astonished Rebels, and killed and captured the whole body.

Complete Defeat of the Enemy.

All along the portion of our line which we have just reviewed, the noise of battle continued to resound. At every point the Rebel battalions seem to have enlarged at least three times, and thrice the ground was left literally covered with their dead and mangled bodies. Against our single unprotected line of battle on Hooker's front, they hurled repeatedly two and three; and although our loss was here most terrible, yet that of the Rebels so far exceeded it as to be almost unexampled in the history of warfare. By nightfall the charging squadrons had been everywhere repulsed, and driven in confusion and dismay back to their barricades. When this consummation became fully evident, there arose all along our battle-begrimed ranks, so loud, so strong, so exultant, so terrible a cheer, that it must have pale the cheeks of guilty traitors even in the streets and houses of Atlanta.

Losses.

Our losses in this fearful conflict, including every part of the line, will amount to about 2500 men, of whom very nearly 2000 fell in the fierce struggle on the centre. The rebel loss in killed, wounded and prisoners, was not less than 6500. At least one-half the rebel army was engaged, the prisoners taken being six or seven thousand. The fight was a most dismal inauguration of Hood's new campaign.

Battles of the 20th and 22d.

Major-General Thomas, commanding the Army of the Cumberland, has issued the following interesting circular to the army near Atlanta.

ARMY HEAD-QUARTERS, July 26.—The Major-General commanding the army congratulates the troops upon the brilliant success attending the Union army in the late battles. In the battle of the 20th inst., in which the Twentieth Corps, one Division of the Fourth Corps, and a part of the Fourteenth Corps were engaged, the total Union loss was, killed, wounded and missing, 783. In front of the Twentieth Corps there were put out of fight six thousand Rebels. Five hundred and sixty-three of the enemy were buried by our own troops, and the rebels were permitted to bury two hundred and fifty of their dead. The Second Division of the Corps repulsed seven different assaults of the enemy, with slight loss to themselves. This fight must have swelled the number of dead and buried by the rebels to beyond three hundred. We also captured seven stand of colors. No official report has been received of the part taken in the battle by the Fourteenth Corps.

In the battle of the 22d, the total loss in killed, wounded and missing, was three thousand five hundred, and ten pieces of artillery. The rebel loss in captured was three thousand two hundred. The known dead of the enemy, in front of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Corps and one division of the Seventeenth, was two thousand one hundred and forty-two. The other divisions of the Seventeenth Corps repulsed six assaults of the enemy before they fell back, which will swell the rebel loss in killed to at least 3000. The latest report states that we buried over 3200 rebels in the field. We captured from the enemy 18 stands of colors and 5000 stand of arms.

By command of Maj.-Gen. THOMAS.

The battle of the 28th was an assault in force of the Fifteenth Corps, and appears to have resulted in a complete defeat of the rebels as that of the 22d. Six hundred and forty-two dead rebels were buried by our forces after that battle.

General Howard has been assigned to the command of the Army of the Tennessee, in place of General McPherson.

ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.

On the morning of the 30th ult., Gen. Grant put into execution a plan which he had been working at for some time for removing the largest and most important of the rebel forts in his front. The news of this exploit took the majority of the people of the North by surprise, but the rebel press indicated more than a week ago their suspicion of such a purpose on the part of Grant. Spades and shovels in this instance have been used to some effect, but in a manner never before known to the army of the Potomac. Lee may be the greatest General of the age, as some of the Copperhead journals have frequently asserted, but there are some things which he has yet to learn from the modest "mudsil" of Illinois, who commands the armies of the Union.

Complete accounts have not been received as we write, but enough is known to show, that the initial step succeeded, and that theoretically the movement of Gen. Grant has achieved a success. Apparently inactive for a month, he has been steadily and with rare

patience, approaching and underreaching the intricate defenses of Petersburg, content to endure meanwhile, the imputation of failure, repeatedly and exultantly made by the Rebel papers of Richmond and their Copperhead allies of the north. The secret has been well kept. Briefly stated, the purpose of the movement was to open a gap in the Rebel defenses by the explosion of a mine, and through it to pour in troops enough to get possession of the line whereof the destroyed battery formed one essential portion.

Explosion of the Mine.

The only concise account that has reached us of the explosion of the mine in front of the 9th corps is dated from headquarters of the army July 30th. It says:

The great event so long anticipated, namely, the explosion of the mine under the Rebel fort in front of the 9th Army Corps, came off this morning at 4:40 o'clock. Picket firing was kept up all night, and in fact at the time the match was applied to the mine, the skirmishers were still engaged on both sides. The volume of dirt thrown up was immense, and rising over three hundred feet in the air, resembled an immense earth fountain more than anything else. The 9th Corps at once charged the works, driving the Rebels to their second line of intrenchments, and taking a number of prisoners, some of whom were dug out of the dirt badly bruised. These Rebel prisoners state that only about a dozen remain of their regiment, a South Carolina one. As soon as the explosion took place, 120 guns immediately opened on our front, while the musketry blazed in one continuous line of fire along the front of the 9th Corps. The scene is long to be remembered by those who witnessed it. The smoke from the guns soon obscured the view, and the first particulars of success were gleaned from those who came in with the prisoners. The prisoners say we completely surprised those in their front, they being mostly asleep at the time. The prisoners also state that there were four guns in the fortification, which, of course, were buried far out of sight. One of the prisoners stated that they were busy mining under our works, and that in two days more they would have been ready to blow them up. Reports just in say that we have possession of the entire rebel line of the Rebel works, with a large number of prisoners. Our loss in the charge was severe, as our men had to cross an open field to reach the Rebels. The troops engaged were the 8th Corps with the 18th supporting them, the 2d and 5th being in reserve. The firing is still going on with great fury, consisting principally of musketry. Gen. Grant and Meade, with all the corps generals, are at the front, watching the progress of affairs.

Description of the Mine.

As Grant's manner of destroying earth-works is somewhat of a novelty in the history of warfare, we give a description of the mine. Our men reached the proper place for the construction of the mine by means of a tunnel running from our exterior line of works to directly under the rebel fort. The excavation of this tunnel cost much labor.

The Mine.

After it was sufficiently evident that a point directly under the fort was reached the construction of the mine was commenced. The angle of the fort projects towards our line, and under this angle the tunnel diverged into two galleries, each running as near as could be ascertained, under each side. It was a matter of eight magazines, placed at intervals along these branch galleries, so that the entire length of the fort might blow up, in place of one spot. Preliminary experiments were made by Colonel Pleasant with cartridges in the galleries, which he inserted in the earth and ignited by a fuse. He ascertained that the work of making a breach would be more effectually secured by distributing the powder instead of putting it in bulk. In the latter case the explosion resulted in a deep and broad crater; in the former in a wide chasm. When the cartridges—his miniature magazine—were not disconnected by packing, the tendency of the explosion was to find vent at the first hole. Hence he resorted to venting between the magazines, or, as it is technically known, "tamping." The magazines are eight in number—four in either branch gallery, in some cases they are built in niches, and again right across the tunnel. They are two by two, and the explosion will result in four craters, tangent to or intersecting each other. The explosion of the magazines will be effected through tubes of pine wood six inches square, half filled with powder. These run along the bottom of the tunnel, and enter the magazine through openings made for them. Between each pair of magazines and over the tubing of powder, which he inserted in the earth and ignited by a fuse, he regular "sure fire," coal mining fuses of Pennsylvania being procured specially for the purpose. The quantity of powder used to charge the mine was six tons.

The Assault Unsuccessful.

Eater advices from Gen. Grant's army state that the assault which followed immediately on the explosion of the mine was unsuccessful, our troops being unable to hold the works after they had been captured. This was owing to the failure of the colored troops to make a charge upon a certain line of works. Our loss is estimated at 2000 killed, wounded and missing.

INVASION OF PENNSYLVANIA.

On the morning of the 28th a rebel force crossed the Potomac at Williamsport, and marched directly upon Chambersburg. Entering that town, they demanded a contribution of half a million dollars. This demand, considering the size of the town, was simply a pretext for burning the place, which the rebels at once proceeded to do. The following account will show the character of the invaders:

The burning of Chambersburg is described by fugitives, who reached Harrisburg late on Saturday night, as having been terrific and horrible in the extreme. After McCausland had taken formal possession of the town, he made a proclamation to the citizens, demanding one hundred thousand dollars in gold. It was of course impossible to comply with such a demand, and sure of its affording a pretext to execute the premeditated plan for destroying Chambersburg. The fact of the most valuable portion of the merchandise of the town having been removed, added to the rage and disappointment of the rebels, and when thus inspired, the order was issued to fire the court-house, town hall and bank buildings. A strong breeze prevailing at the time, soon communicated the flames to surround-

ing buildings. Parties of soldiers, having sacked several drug and chemical stores, had manufactured turpentine balls, which they threw in all directions, thus creating as many different flames in different localities of the town, which soon united in one general terrific and devouring conflagration. Speedily the scene became heart-rending and appalling, the cracking and roaring of the flames, as they leaped from house to house, the shrieks of terrified women, the cries of panic-stricken and suffering children, the piteous appeals of the old and helpless, as they were heard above the noise of the conflagration, only served to elicit the derision of the base wretches who came thus to sack and destroy the town. Everywhere families were rushing from their homes to find safety in the desolated fields around Chambersburg. Women could be seen wildly seeking for children that were lost, while children were weeping for parents who could not be found. A gentleman who communicated these brief facts says that the history of modern warfare contains nothing to equal the atrocity and unprovoked barbarity of this burning of Chambersburg.

Pursuit of the Raiders.

When General Averill reached Chambersburg the flames had attained such headway as to render it impossible for his men to stay their devouring progress. Hence the word onward rang along his line, and onward it was at such a speed as men never before took.

The rebels hurried over the St. Thomas road towards McConnellsburg, but the rear of the retreating column could not fail to distinguish the approach of Averill, so they were prevented from committing any deeds of violence to the people of the rich district through which they passed, and when they reached McConnellsburg they had neither time to levy a contribution, light a torch or kindle a fire, Averill came thundering after them. He entering at one side of McConnellsburg while the invaders left at the other. It is believed in official circles that the rebels, after having been severely punished at McConnellsburg, pushed on towards Hancock, where they effected a crossing. This being so, makes it certain that there are no rebels at least of the column that moved from Williamsport last week, now in the State.

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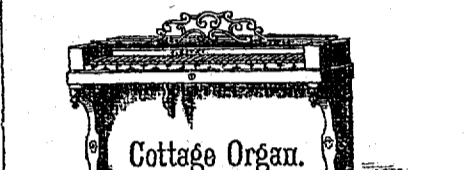
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